DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 416 452 CS 013 057

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TITLE A Study of Eighth Grade Students from a South Texas Middle School Who Participated in 30-Minute Required Reading Periods of Self-Selected Books.
PUB DATE 1998-03-12
NOTE 64p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Grade 8; Junior High Schools; Middle Schools; *Reading Achievement; *Reading Attitudes; Reading Habits; Reading Improvement; Reading Instruction; *Reading Material Selection; Reading Motivation; Reading Research; Student Surveys
IDENTIFIERS Gates MacGinitie Reading Tests; *Middle School Students; Self Report Measures; *Self Selection (Reading); T Test; Texas Assessment of Academic Skills; Texas (South)

ABSTRACT

A study focused on 41 eighth-grade students from a south Texas middle school who read self-selected books for 30-minute periods 5 times weekly from October 1996 to May 1997 to determine if increased reading time and book self-selection would improve their reading achievement. The study also sought to determine the students' attitudes towards reading. To determine reading achievement, a comparison was made of the 1996 and 1997 Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) Reading scores and the pre- and posttest normal curve equivalent (NCE) scores of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Level E, Form 1. A survey determined students' attitudes towards reading after the required reading. To analyze the data, a t-test was used to determine any significant improvement in reading achievement. Results indicated there was no significant improvement in reading achievement as measured by the tests. Nonetheless, the subgroup of ESL (English as a Second Language) students did show significant gains on the TAAS Reading Test. Students' self-reported data indicated they read an average of 3.12 books in sixth grade, 4.66 in seventh grade, and 12.4 books in eighth grade. These differences were found to be statistically significantly different between grades 6 and 8 and between grades 7 and 8. Although there was no overall significant improvement in reading achievement, students' positive attitudes towards the required reading and the increase in the numbers of books read suggest that the required reading should continue, with some modifications to help ensure higher gains in achievement by all students. (Extensive tables of data are included. Contains 42 references; a sample student survey, survey results, and test results are appended.) (Author/CR)

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ED 416 452

A Study of Eighth Grade Students from a South Texas Middle School Who Participated in 30-Minute Required Reading Periods of Self-Selected Books

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March 12, 1998

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on 41 eighth grade students from a middle school in south Texas who read self-selected books for 30 minutes five times a week from October 1996 to May 1997 to determine if the increased reading time and the self-selection of books would improve their reading achievement. The study also sought to determine the students' attitudes towards reading. In order to determine reading achievement, a comparison was made of the 1996 and 1997 Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) Reading scores and the pre- and posttest normal curve equivalent (NCE) scores of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Level E, Form 1. A survey was used to determine the students' attitudes towards reading after the required reading.

To analyze the data, a t-test for Nonindependent Samples was used to determine any significant improvement in reading achievement. Overall, the results indicated that there was no significant improvement in reading achievement as measured by the TAAS Reading test ($t = 1.04$, $df = 40$, $p > .10$). There was also no significant improvement on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test ($t = .03$), $df = 40$, $p > .10$). Nonetheless, the subgroup of ESL (English as a Second Language) students did show significant gains on the TAAS Reading Test ($t = 4.54$, $df = 7$, $p < .01$).

Self-reported data by the students indicates that they read an average of 3.12 books in sixth grade, 4.66 in seventh grade, and 12.40 books in eighth grade. These differences were found to be statistically significantly different ($p < .001$) between sixth and eighth grade and between seventh and eighth grade. Although there was no overall significant improvement in reading achievement, the students' positive attitudes towards the required reading and the increase in the numbers of books read suggest that the required reading should continue. This initiative should incorporate some modifications to help ensure higher gains in achievement by all students.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Many classroom teachers are concerned over the negative attitudes students have towards reading. A review of the literature indicates that their concern is well-founded as studies show a decline in reading scores on standardized tests, a decline in attitudes towards reading and a growing number of aliterates, i. e., individuals who have good reading abilities, but choose not to read (Silha, 1992; Thimmesch, cited in Duchein & Mealey, 1993; Vaughn, 1994; Wagner, 1994). Yet, there is also a growing body of research which indicates that when students are provided with ample time, suitable context, proper motivation, and appropriate reading materials, they will improve their reading achievement and attitudes towards reading (Lesesne, 1991).

Many studies indicate that social pressures, television, and the increased use of testing in the classrooms have contributed to the decrease in leisure reading done by secondary students (Dobson, 1994). There might not be much teachers can do about pressures students may face outside of the classroom, but there is something they can do about what happens in the classroom. While state or district-mandated testing seems to be here to stay, teachers must redirect the focus of their reading instruction. Reading instruction must focus on the students' needs and the whole reading process, not simply on just one component of the reading process. If we want to prepare students to become functional citizens of a global and highly technological world, reading instruction must interest them and it must be relevant to their needs. Therefore, if teachers want to close the gap between where students are now and where we want them to be, they must revise their ways of teaching reading.

Despite the research, many schools focus only on the instructional component of reading. This emphasis on the instructional component of reading seems to be detrimental to our students - the poor reader, the average and the above average reader. Focusing on only one aspect of the reading process fragments the act of reading, thus making it meaningless or irrelevant. (Silha, 1992; Dobson, 1994; Podl, 1995). Reading is a lifelong task that needs to be nourished properly

to keep up with the times (Silha, 1992).

One of the researchers is an eighth grade Reading teacher at a middle school in south Texas. She has been teaching there for the last six years. The school has had continued low performance on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). It even received a "clearly unacceptable" rating by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in 1993. While new initiatives had improved the school's performance on all areas of the TAAS test, the researcher continued to see low performance on the TAAS Reading test and an apathy towards reading by incoming 8th grade students. Following several discussions with her colleague, the decision was made to restructure her reading instruction for the 1996-1997 school year. The instructional re-evaluation was also motivated by the success one of the feeder schools experienced with an intensive reading program.

In 1993 this particular feeder school was also rated "clearly unacceptable" by TEA as a result of their students' performance on the TAAS test. Subsequently, the school implemented a reading initiative using the Focus basal readers. This program encouraged placement of students in supplementary basal readers based on their appropriate reading levels. The students read during class time, responded to their reading in a variety of activities, and had continuous monitoring. The students were moved to the next level as their reading ability improved. On the 1993-94 TAAS administration, the school's overall performance surpassed 70 percent. This feeder school's success with this program provides support for the practice of placing students at their appropriate reading levels, providing the students with the opportunity to read in class, and allowing the students to respond to their reading in a variety of activities.

The feeder school's success with their intensified reading program and a review of related literature led the researchers to consider whether requiring eighth grade middle school students to read self-selected books for 30 minutes five times a week would help them improve their reading achievement, their attitudes towards reading, and increase their time spent on reading for pleasure.

Statement of the Problem

In 1993 the middle school involved in this study was rated "clearly unacceptable" by the TEA as a result of low student performance on the TAAS test. Several initiatives were embarked

upon that resulted in the school attaining improved performance on this TAAS test. Although TAAS scores had gradually improved during the last few years, the results were not at the level teachers, parents, administrators, and the community felt they should have been given the time, effort, and money invested in the campus when the study began. Eighth grade students, in general, were still reading below grade level; there was still apathy towards reading; and, the percentage of the eighth grade students passing the TAAS Reading test was still below 70%, when the present study was initiated.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study were to determine if the reading of self-selected books for 30-minute periods five times a week from October 1996 to May 1997 would improve the reading achievement of eighth grade middle school students and to determine the students' attitudes towards reading.

Research Questions

A review of the literature indicates that in order to have a successful reading program in the middle schools several components have to be in place. These include:

1. Students must be allowed the opportunity to read daily in school.
2. Students must be allowed to self-select well-written books that are relevant and are interesting to them.
3. Students must be provided with the appropriate environment which is conducive to reading for pleasure. (Lesesne, 1991; Vaughn, 1994)
4. Students must be allowed to make relevant meaning of the text and be allowed to respond to the text.

Based on these findings, the following research questions were posed for this study:

1. Does the reading of self-selected books for 30 minutes five times a week from October 1996 to May 1997 significantly improve eighth grade middle school students' reading achievement?

2. What are the attitudes towards reading of eighth grade middle school students who participated in the required 30-minute periods of reading self-selected books five times a week from October 1996 to May 1997?

Operational Definitions

Aliteracy - A term used to describe when a person is able to read but chooses not to read (Duchein & Mealey, 1993).

Attitude - How a person feels, either positively or negatively, towards an idea, subject, or situation (Wagner, 1994)

Avid reader - A person who enjoys reading and willingly reads frequently.

Independent reading level - A level of reading difficulty low enough that the reader can progress without noticeable hindrance; the reader can ordinarily recognize at least 98 percent of the words and comprehend at least 90 percent of what he or she reads. (Burns, Roe, & Ross, 1988).

Instructional reading level - A level of difficulty low enough that the reader can learn as he reads; the reader can ordinarily recognize at least 95 percent of the words in a selection and comprehend at least 75 percent of what he reads. (Burns, Roe, & Ross, 1988).

Poor reader - A person who has experienced difficulties reading, has learning disabilities, has poor motivation, is discouraged because of previous failures, or has basic reading skills deficiencies (Fuhler, cited in Jostes, 1993).

Reluctant reader - A person who has reading skills but who is not inclined to read (Worthy, 1996).

Sustained Silent Reading - A designated time during which a student reads silently without interruption (Guszak, 1978).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Educators have been concerned over middle school students with poor reading habits and poor attitudes towards reading. Some students, including those who experience academic success and who are proficient readers, seem to reflect apathy towards reading during the middle school years. Nonetheless, during the last two decades, there has been an increasing body of evidence which indicates that students are reading and do enjoy reading for pleasure when provided with the opportunity and appropriate materials. To address the concern of students' reading achievement and attitudes towards reading, this chapter will review the literature focusing on the following areas:

1. The first section covers general trends in reading achievement.
2. The second section focuses on factors that discourage both proficient and reluctant readers from reading for pleasure.
3. The third section describes conditions which help middle school students improve their reading achievement and their attitudes towards reading.

General Trends in Reading Achievement.

For years educators and the public at large have received very dismal reports on the condition of America's students. Studies indicate that American students are reading below grade level and are reading much less than previous generations (Blintz, 1993; Vaughn, 1994; Podl, 1995; Carbo, 1996). Organizations have begun initiatives to remedy the problem. Some movements include well-known people, such as those started by former First Lady Barbara Bush, who called people to action to fight the problem of illiteracy in America (Fowles, 1993). Fowles also cites data from Kozol and Harman, which states that many adults in mainstream America are illiterate. Some national reports indicate that only one-third of American students read at levels that

are likely to assure them academic success and good jobs (Carbo, 1996). In a study of middle school students Lesesne (cited in Vaughn, 1994) found that 75% read less than one hour daily and only 20% had read a book six months previous to the study.

This situation is quite disturbing since our society has become a highly technological, information-based world requiring people to read more through the use of computer screens, fax messages, or specialized journals. Reading is now a basic building block underlying the survival skills of today's information-based economy. These skills involve: absorbing information, analyzing, organizing, interpreting, communicating, understanding, and learning new ideas. It is a part of the fabric which comprises a global, international, multi-cultural society. Reading is required more in different facets of society - from corporate America to political and philosophical organizations (Silha, 1992; Shuman, 1993; Guthrie, Schafer, Wang, & Afflerbach, 1995; Carbo, 1996).

Yet, 94% of 9-year-olds in the U.S. have only rudimentary reading skills and 40% of the 13-year-olds have not acquired the more advanced reading skills needed to succeed in the middle grades (Silha, 1992). Carbo (1996) cites the 1994 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report which shows that only one-third of U. S. students read at levels that are likely to assure them academic success and good jobs. She further states that students today need to be highly literate to compete in a demanding and internationally competitive workplace. Silha (1992) reports that the average American reads for only 24 minutes a day, which is down 25% from 1965. He states that the average fifth-grader reads 4.6 minutes outside of school, which is also down 25% from 1965.

The literature shows that students with poor reading skills are twice as likely to drop out of school as students with average or above average reading skills. Poor readers tend to face additional social problems such as unemployment, crime, teenage pregnancy, and substance abuse. In addition, the research shows that students who have more positive attitudes and better reading skills tend to have more success in school and in the workforce than those who do not possess these abilities (Kletzien & Hushion, 1993; Silha, 1992).

While much of the information presented above is very disconcerting, there is a growing body of research which indicates that students do like and want to read (Lesesne, 1991). Lesesne

cites Buckman's 1989 study of over 300 middle school students who indicated that they wanted and/or liked to read. These students indicated that they enjoyed reading books which involved humor, mystery, suspense, and books about real people. Fowles (1993) questions reports that portray a very dismal condition of the reading habits and abilities of America's population. Fowles cites the Educational Testing Service which places the proportion of Americans who are literate at 96%, while Kozol estimates that only 65% are literate. Fowles points to statistical data which indicate that Americans are spending more and more on books. In 1988 Americans spent $9.8 million on books - almost three times as much as they spent in 1970, i.e., $2.9 million. In 1975 1.5 million volumes were sold, while in 1988, 2.2 million volumes were sold. According to surveys administered by the U.S. Commerce Department, bookstore sales rose 64.5% between 1982 and 1987. In addition, Fowles cites federal data which reveals that Americans have also increased their practice of borrowing books from libraries by at least 25%.

Fowles further points to the book industry's jump in sales from $8.2 billion in 1982 to $15.4 billion in 1990. He also states that the fastest-growing segment of the book business during this time period was juvenile trade books. Fowles also indicates that the magazine industry has grown, as evidenced by the number of titles available for public consumption increasing from 445 in 1963 to 1,275 in 1988. The only print business that has not had an increase is the newspaper industry. For the last twenty years, newspaper circulation has remained at about 62 million copies. Per capita, the newspaper circulation dropped from .305 in 1970 to .258 in 1987.

Fowles disputes data from Robinson, who has been measuring how Americans spend their time. Robinson reports that Americans are spending less time in leisure reading than reported by the print industry. He states that Americans are reading for pleasure only 1.9 hours per week. Fowles cites the NAEP's 1988 report which shows that students at ages 9 and 17 were reading significantly better than their counterparts in 1971, while 13-year-olds were on par with their counterparts. Fowles attributes the decline in SAT scores to the accessibility of a college education to more people who were previously denied the opportunity. He cites reports from the College Board which state that the higher the percentage of students taking the test, the lower the average scores are likely to be . This has been just the case as is evident in the increasing number of seniors taking the SAT each year. In 1980 32% of all graduating seniors took the test, in 1985

36% took the test, and in 1990 40% took the test. Fowles suggests that these reports contradict the dismal reports which claim that Americans' reading habits are getting worse. He states that perhaps what is happening is that the media prints such reports because of their sensationalism aspect. He concludes that reading is not in danger of being displaced, but rather that Americans are cramming more activities into their day.

Fowles' report is not the only one of its kind. Other studies reveal that students do enjoy reading, but not the reading material required in schools (Griggs cited in Martin, 1991). Fowles' report was based on research on media studies to determine whether or not Americans are reading more or less than reported in national reports. It did not purport to report on the conditions or quality of reading Americans are doing. Reports such as the NAEP give a more complete picture of the conditions of reading by Americans, especially American students. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (March 1996), the 1994 Reading Report Card data indicated that fourth, eighth, and twelth grade students who more frequently read for fun on their own time tended to have higher average reading proficiencies than those who did not. However, Fowles' report is a good indication of the reading potential of Americans. Fowles' report supports the trend in classrooms throughout the country which reflects that students are willing to read if they are given the appropriate time and materials. The review of the literature provides evidence which indicates that more and more teachers are tapping into this potential to help students discover or rediscover the pleasures of reading (Sullivan, 1991; Thames and Reeves, 1994; Podl, 1995; Carbo; 1996).

Factors that Contribute to a Decline in Reading for Pleasure and Reading Attitudes.

Research suggests that elementary school students may have positive reading experiences. Students who are frequent, if not avid, readers while in elementary school tend to read for a variety of reasons and do wide reading. In fact, many elementary students read more than 20 books in a school year. Avid elementary school readers have been known to read more than 20 books in one week. These readers state that the wide variety of books available, frequent trips to the library, parental involvement, motivated teachers, book clubs, and reading contests are some of the reasons

for their reading proficiency (Ley, Schaer, & Dismukes, 1994).

Many students (poor readers, reluctant readers, and avid readers) experience a decline in attitudes towards reading in their middle school years. In fact, reports indicate that students' reading peaks during their elementary school years and drops during their middle school years (Sullivan, 1991; Ley, Schaer, & Dismukes, 1994). Secondary students attribute their decline in attitudes towards reading and the amount of time they spend reading for pleasure to some of the following factors:

- lack of time allotted to reading for pleasure in school
- assigned selections which are not at their level or of their interest
- extracurricular and social activities
- lack of teacher and school motivation to read for pleasure
- inappropriate pacing
- environments which inhibit reading for pleasure
- lack of time to discuss books with others
- lack of parental support
- increased testing experiences
- increased concentration on skills and drills (Silha, 1992; Dobson, 1994; Ley, Schaer, & Dismukes, 1994)

The research indicates that students need to have ample time to read if they are to improve their reading skills. Students learn to read by reading. Often, the only time a student will pick a book to read is during the time provided by the teacher in the classroom. Yet, research shows that teachers provide very little time for actual reading (Humphrey, cited in Silha, 1992; Kletzien & Hushion, 1992; Dobson, 1994; Carlsen cited in Ley, Schaer, & Dismukes, 1994).

Time allocated for reading is not enough to guarantee student success; students also need to have reading material at their appropriate reading levels. The literature reveals that teachers must provide students with the appropriate materials to experience reading success. The materials must be at the students' independent or instructional reading level. Material that is too difficult (at the frustration reading level) causes disequilibrium within the student and turns the student off from reading. This sense of failure, if continuous, causes students to develop an aversion to reading.

If, on the other hand, the material is too easy, students may become bored and disillusioned. Students desire to be challenged and learn something new (Kletzien & Hushion, 1992; Dobson, 1994). Some studies show that when students are placed at the independent reading level, there are no significant gains in reading achievement. Yet, when students are placed at the instructional level, significant gains in reading achievement are evident (Carver & Leibert, 1995).

If students are not allowed to self-select the books they read for pleasure, they may tend to begin to view the act of reading in a negative manner. Then they may also begin to view reading as more of a chore than as an enjoyable activity. Sullivan (1991) found that students began to lose interest in reading for pleasure in secondary schools because they were required to read assigned reading selections. Sullivan's students stated that they resented and were turned off from reading in secondary schools because they felt they were literally being told what, when, and how to read. When students are forced to read materials that are not of their interests, they tend to read mechanically, without any enthusiasm. Sullivan concludes that "A natural reading life is an organic one in which personal choices lead to personal connections and meaningful discoveries. . . It's not natural to read what we don't like and don't feel connected to." (p. 45).

In middle school, students begin to experience physical, emotional, and social changes. They tend to become more interested in other activities, such as athletics or extracurricular activities, as a means to meet their social or acceptance needs. This need to be accepted by others leads many students to become associated with special groups, such as minority groups, school groups, or social groups. This need for social acceptance may also make middle school students shift their attention to nonacademic activities. Reading for pleasure, therefore, may take a low priority in their lives (Ley, Schaer, & Dismukes, 1994; Podl, 1995).

One factor that is evident in many of the studies involving secondary readers is the lack of importance given to reading for pleasure in the secondary schools by teachers and school administrations. The self-contained classes in elementary schools are very different from the departmentalized classes in secondary schools. In secondary schools many content area teachers assume that all students can read and concentrate on teaching their content subjects. Many content area teachers believe that reading belongs in the Reading or Language Arts classes. Also, many secondary schools place more emphasis on athletics and band, than they do on developing

their libraries (Humphrey cited in Silha, 1992).

Students need to read at their own pace. Sullivan (1991) found that students in the secondary schools tend to be given assigned readings following a timeline. This lack of control over their reading was a factor that Sullivan found to cause a negative attitude towards reading amongst her secondary students. Sullivan found that her students did not like the idea of being forced to read assigned selections according to a timeline. She found that when this occurred (usually during the 7th and 8th grade), students began to rebel against reading. This rebellion caused some avid readers to feel burned out with reading.

Reading in a context, or environment, that is appropriate and conducive to reading is important for students. The environment must be friendly, warm, enthusiastic, and motivational. One of the fond memories students have from elementary schools is the reading corner. Most elementary schools have reading corners which include a rug, throw pillows, posters, stuffed animals, and other items. Some secondary teachers have found that such environments are still important for success with secondary students (Carroll & Dionisio, 1992; Guthrie, Schafer, Wang & Afflerbach, 1995).

Students should also be guided to develop a deeper understanding of what they read. Dobson (1994) states that students are rarely asked to go beyond the surface meaning of the books they read. Dobson cites a 1990 NAEP report which states that students were able to construct 'initial meaning' (surface meaning), but few were able to make basic inferences or recall basic detail with ease. When students do not develop good, meaning-making reading skills, students tend to become passive readers who eventually become discouraged with reading (Dobson, 1994; Podl, 1995).

Sharing what they have read with each other helps enhance students' intellectual and affective development. Reading is both a cognitive and a social process. It is not simply a matter of picking up a book and reading silently. Students need to have the opportunity to discuss with others their interpretations of text and possibly find multiple ways of understanding what one reads. When poor or reluctant readers do not interact with one another to discuss ideas presented in the books they read, that could limit their social interaction and communication skills, as well as restrict their interpretations of text (Guthrie, Schafer, Wang, & Afflerbach, 1995; Bloome, Harris,

& Ludlum cited in Canady & Krantz, 1996). According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (March 1996), data from the 1994 Reading Report Card indicates that eighth and twelth grade students who reported being asked by their teachers at least once a week to explain or support their interpretations of what they had read had higher average reading proficiencies than students who were not required to do so. Moreover, fourth, eighth, and twelth grade students who reported more frequent home discussions about school work demonstrated higher reading proficiencies than those students who did not discuss these issues at home.

Students also need to have continual parental support. Parents need to be evident in their child's life in the secondary schools just as in the elementary schools. Parents play a pivotal role in the development of their children's reading abilities (Cope, 1993; Vaughn, 1994; Canady & Krantz, 1996). Hewison (cited in Cope, 1993) studied readers with poor reading skills and their home environments. He found parents who lacked interest in their children's education, non-reading parents, homes with few books, parents who created an impoverished language development, and single-parent homes or homes where both parents worked.

Another important factor that is essential in a reading classroom is a motivated teacher who models good reading habits. Often teachers simply state the importance of reading, but fail to demonstrate their own pleasure in reading. Humphrey (cited in Silha, 1992) states that many content-area middle-school teachers do not consider themselves reading teachers and do not provide students with the adequate motivation and encouragement to read for pleasure. McGovern (cited in Silha, 1992) adds that many educators do not demand more of students because they have accepted the remediation model. McGovern agrees with researcher John Goodlad who calls this lowered sense of standards 'emotional neutrality' as the root of the problem (p. 6).

Teachers need to ensure that all aspects of reading are covered in school. For too long, much of the time spent in the classroom has been dedicated to testing, drill, and practice. When schools focus on only one aspect of the reading process, they fragment the reading process, thus making it senseless and irrelevant. The concentration on worksheets and taking multiple-choice tests reduces the student's view of reading as the act of finding a particular idea, as if this idea resides fixed and absolute in a text (Zamell cited in Dobson, 1994, p. 19; Podl, 1995).

Factors Which Increase Reading for Pleasure and Improve Attitudes Towards Reading

While there is an aliteracy problem amongst secondary students, there is also a growing body of evidence which indicates that secondary students can discover or rediscover the pleasure of reading. Educators from around the country have been experiencing great success with different reading initiatives. Recent studies have found that secondary students do enjoy reading when provided with the following conditions:

- adequate time allotted to reading for pleasure in school
- self-selection of the books they can read for pleasure
- motivated and enthusiastic teachers
- self-pacing in their reading for pleasure
- an environment which is conducive to reading for pleasure
- reading in a social context
- increased parental involvement as in elementary schools
- minimal practicing of skills and drills for testing (Lesesne, 1991; Martin, 1991; Sullivan, 1991; Vaughn, 1994; Carver & Leibert, 1995; Canady & Krantz, 1996)

Educators need to provide students with the opportunity to get involved with books in the classroom, since for many, this may be the only place they have to experience the joy of reading for pleasure. This time must not be a time for drills, worksheets, or for teachers to catch up on their paper work. This must be a time that is entirely dedicated to reading for pleasure (Vaughn, 1994).

Vaughn suggests that in order to develop the reading attitudes and habits of students, they need to be surrounded with books. Books must be readily accessible to the students. She states that students should have arm-length access to a wide variety of reading material from which to self-select. Most secondary students are interested in nonfiction books, comics, mystery, humor, suspense, adventure, romance, science fiction classics, and books that deal with problems which are similar to theirs. They also enjoy reading comics, magazines, series books, and computer or technical journals (Lesesne, 1991; Worthy, 1996).

Students need to be allowed to self-select the books they read for pleasure. Self-selection allows students to develop their interests in reading. It also helps them discover the potential that reading has for individual development and enjoyment. In addition, it gives them the opportunity of experiencing the values that they assign to the task of reading. Studies indicate that when readers are allowed to self-select the books they read, standardized tests' scores also increase (Ley, Schaer, & Dismukes, 1994; Vaughn, 1994). Lesesne (1991) suggests to educators that they find out what interests their students and allow them the time and material to develop their reading for pleasure.

Vogel and Zancanella (1991) suggest that perhaps the difference in teachers' and students' perceptions of what constitutes reading for pleasure is the cause of the problem that many students do not read more than they do at the present time. They state that oftentimes teachers want students to read material that has substance and depth, such as classical literature. At the same time, they want students to enjoy exciting, energetic experiences provided by paperbacks, best-sellers, and popular movies. The researchers found that when they studied many of the popular paperbacks students prefer to read right now, they indeed provide much of the same substance and depth as that which is provided by classical literature. They also suggest that teachers find a way to incorporate their students' interests into the curriculum. However, Carver and Leibert (1995) caution not to let students select just any book from any level of difficulty. In their study, they found that students will make significant improvements in reading achievement when they self-selected books at their instructional levels. They found that when students read books at their independent levels, they do not experience significant improvement in their reading achievement.

If teachers want to increase students' reading for pleasure, then they have to become positive reading role models. They need to be excited about their own reading and talk to their students about the books which they are reading. Students need to see teachers reading enthusiastically (Vaughn, 1994). Research indicates that when teachers show enthusiasm for reading, students become more interested in reading, spend more time reading on their own, and improve their reading ability (Howard, 1991). Furthermore, Alexander (cited in Howard, 1991) states that teachers who seldom enjoy reading find it more difficult to motivate their students to develop their pleasure reading habits than teachers who clearly enjoy it. Blintz (1993) states that if

educators want to remedy the decline in reading achievement and reading for pleasure, they have to re-evaluate their curriculum, school and classroom organization, teacher-student relationship, and most importantly, they need to look at themselves. Blintz suggests that teachers reflect on their own beliefs about reading and how these beliefs can transform classrooms into learning environments. He also states that teachers can't expect students to reflect and transform their own behaviors and attitudes, until they have done so themselves. Sullivan (1991) found that when teachers restructure their reading instruction to make reading more pleasurable for their students, teachers experience positive results. Students want their teachers to become more involved with them. Sullivan states that secondary students are saying the following to their educational establishments:

> Let us make our own choices. Let us form strong personal connections with whatever reading makes us feel passionate and alive. If we want to read romances and comics, don't worry: we won't read them forever. We won't carry Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys to college with us. Turn us loose a little. Let us explore. Watch us grow. We will probably discover some of the very things you want us to know. If you want to help, read to us; introduce us to what you love in that way. If we love it, too, we'll go for more of it. If not, don't make us write interminable formal analyses of what you love. It's not the way to make us appreciate literature.
> Robert E. Lee High School, Baytown, Texas 77520 (p. 46).

Students must be allowed to read at a level in which they feel comfortable and will experience success without the risk of being ridiculed or forced to read books far beyond their grasp. However, Worthy (1996) recommends that teachers should not focus solely on reading levels or segregate students by reading levels. Johns (1997) also encourages teachers not to focus on determining the errors or miscues students make while reading, but rather, focus on the students' ability to make sense of what they read.

Canady and Krantz (1996) cite studies which indicate that students will optimize their language competence when they are in an environment which presents reading for pleasure in an

exciting manner. They further state that this environment must be risk-free, allowing all students (proficient, reluctant, and poor readers) to believe that reading can be an enjoyable experience. The teacher helps create the environment by being enthusiastic about reading as well. Podl (1995) found that after she had initiated a Guided Independent Reading program in her classroom, most students would come to her class, find a comfortable place, and become engrossed in their books. Although she did provide a reading list, she included books which appealed to her students.

Another factor that is important in a reading classroom is monitoring. Podl (1995) would spend several minutes before the end of the period monitoring her students' reading. She would ask questions about the books and her students' comprehension. However, she stated that she mainly allowed her students to self-monitor their reading.

Students also need a clear, relevant purpose for reading. They need to engage in reading that makes sense. Reading is done not only for gathering information; it can also be for communicating with others, to entertain, and to learn how to do things (Hoskins, cited in Canady & Krantz, 1996). Reading is a social process. Students need to engage in activities that promote the interaction of ideas presented in the books they read with other students. When students are allowed to share what they read with others, they increase their knowledge of the reading process, written language conventions, literary interpretations, awareness of multiple perspectives on a literary theme, and develop their ability to make critical judgments. Research shows that when students are involved in classes where they are allowed to read in a social context, they become active, instead of passive, readers (Guthrie, Shafer, Wang, & Afflerbach, 1995).

Cope's (1993) study of how students become avid readers, lukewarm readers, or nonreaders showed that the home environment played a major role in developing students' reading skills. Cope's study supports Durkin's (1966) research which indicates that parents are crucial in the reading development of their children. In her study, Durkin found that most avid readers owned books and came from home environments in which they were read aloud to at an early age. In addition, many of these parents considered themselves avid readers. Thus, parents need to continue to provide their support throughout their child's education regardless of the grade level they are in.

Summary

Educators today are concerned with the growing problem of aliteracy amongst our students. Studies abound reflecting declining scores in reading achievement, especially in secondary schools. Educational reports, such as those provided by the NAEP, indicate that many American students are reading below desired levels of proficiency, are reading less than previous generations, and are growing more apathetic towards reading.

A review of the literature suggests that there are some factors within present educational systems that contribute to students' declining interest in reading for pleasure. However, recent studies indicate that when students are provided with the proper opportunities, materials, and conditions, students do enjoy reading for pleasure.

If reading educators want to reverse the present aliteracy trend and motivate students to improve their reading achievement and attitudes towards reading, they need to ensure that factors which improve attitudes towards reading are present in their classrooms and are part of their reading programs.

Hypotheses

Research Hypothesis

Reading self-selected books for 30 minutes five times a week from October 1996 to May 1997 does significantly improve eighth grade middle school students' reading achievement.

Null Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the pretest and posttest reading achievement scores of eighth grade middle school students who read self-selected books for 30 minutes five days a week from October 1996 to May 1997.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Due to their continuing low performance on the TAAS test and their poor attitudes towards reading, the decision was made to require a group of 1996-1997 eighth grade students to read one-half hour at home and keep a reading log. The students were free to select whichever book they wanted, as long as the contents were appropriate for school use. Students were guided into self-selecting books to read through the use of the rule of thumb recommended by Glazer (cited in Walker, 1996). The rule of thumb asks students to select books which do not have more than five unknown or difficult words on any given page. The students were to read for 30 minutes five days each week from October 1996 to May 1997 and enter into their reading logs a summary of what they had read that day. In addition, they were supposed to discuss their readings with their parents and have their parents sign their reading logs daily. The format for the reading log was as follows:

Reading Log

Date	Title	Author	Page

Brief summary (3-5) sentences) of text read:

The entries would become more specific when the researcher wanted the students to practice the specific skills covered in class. During those occasions, the Reading Log entries would be expected to address such questions as the following:

- What did the main character do today?
- Why did the main character do this?
- Do you agree with the main character? Why or why not?
- What caused the main character to act in this manner?
- What do you think will happen next? Why do you think so?
- What would you have done differently? Why?

The Reading Logs were submitted to the English and the Reading teachers at least once each six weeks for evaluation and a grade. They were graded based on the number and quality of entries. Each week gave the student a possible 100 daily grade. However, the Reading Logs were not graded after January. At this time, the students began preparing for the TAAS Reading Test scheduled for the Spring 1997 term. In addition, students were asked to keep a list of books read throughout the school year. Students were supposed to read at least one book per six weeks.

To motivate the students to begin and continue reading throughout the school year, a Reading Club was started. Some of the students included in the study were part of the Reading Club. This was the first time this middle school had a reading club in more than five years. The club was very, very informal. Students would come to one of the researcher's classroom during lunch period and read and discuss the books they were reading. The club was sometimes known as the Nerd Club, as many GT and Honor students were involved, or the Eating Club, because of their eating habits. Many times it was simply a place to visit and avoid the weather and crowds outside. However, to lure them into reading more books, books were bought from the TROLL book club. This became a very popular activity because many people got involved in purchasing books from TROLL. These included students who were not members of the Reading Club, students from other academic teams, teachers, and even the new school principal. The club raised and spent more than $500 in books purchased from the TROLL book club. Several books

purchased from TROLL were great hits. Books such as the Lurlene McDaniel series, the R. L. Stine series, Doomstone, and The Relic were so popular that there was a waiting list to see who would read them next. Twelve copies of each book were originally ordered (one for each original member of the Reading Club). Although the copies were rotated, there was still a waiting list for these books. Faculty members at the campus encouraged students to continue reading.

To conduct this study a combination of a descriptive and a one group pretest-posttest experimental design was used. The study was conducted to determine if:

1. there was a significant difference in eighth grade students' pre- and posttest reading achievement scores as a result of the 30 minutes of required reading of self-selected books five days a week from October 1996 to May 1997.
2. eighth grade students who participated in the required 30-minute periods of reading self-selected books from October 1996 to May 1997 experienced positive attitudes towards reading.

The Research Population

Students who participated in this study came from a middle school in south Texas. Its population for the 1996-1997 school year was approximately 1250 students. The student population is comprised of mostly second and third generation Mexican immigrants. It is a Chapter One school having more than 60% of its students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. It houses sixth through eighth grade students who range from ten years to sixteen years of age. During the 1996-1997 school year, it was one of several secondary schools who received a Technology Infrastructure Fund (TIF) grant from the State of Texas on the basis of its Chapter One population.

The student body is made up of academic teams - three per grade level in addition to an ESL I and ESL II team and a Special Education team. The campus has numerous extracurricular activities such as athletics, cheerleading, band, orchestra, Student Council, Courtesy Club, Computer Club, Chess Club, University Interscholastic League (UIL) activities, Reading Club,

Honor Society, Yearbook staff, and other organizations.

Communities in Schools (CIS), which is a civic organization working with the school districts, offers immigration and citizenship classes, and English classes for parents at the campus. Parent groups help monitor the students during the lunch periods and after school. In 1995-1996, the middle school's PTO (Parent - Teacher Organization) was recognized at the state level for having one of the largest number of members. In addition, CIS helps the at-risk students with counseling and tutorial services.

In 1992 the middle school became a member of the Texas Partnership School Initiative (PSI). This program allowed the school to obtain waivers from TEA to implement initiatives that would help enhance the school's academic performance on the TAAS test. In 1993 the school received a "clearly unacceptable" rating from TEA based on low student performance on the TAAS test. Through initiatives begun under PSI, the school has experienced gradual but steady improvement in all areas.

In 1996-1997 there were approximately 110 students in the team which participated in the present study The team's faculty was comprised of one Social Studies teacher, one Science teacher, one Math teacher, one English teacher and one Reading teacher. The team's students consisted of one class of 24 Gifted and Talented students, one class of 29 Honors students (five of the students were not identified as Honor students, but were placed in that class because of scheduling), and three regular classes. One of the Regular Reading classes was comprised primarily of English as a Second Language (ESL) III students who had limited mastery of the English language. Four of the 110 students who were classified as either being Content Mastery or Resource students.

The Sample

The Gates - MacGinitie Reading Test, Level E, Form I, was not administered to at the end of the school year as a posttest due to conflicting scheduling with campus and departmental timelines. Therefore, students were randomly selected and contacted to come to be posttested on June 20, 1997 and June 23, 1997, instead of May 1997. Some students were out of town; many

others had wrong telephone numbers or no telephone numbers listed; others could not attend; and, still others chose not to take the posttest. Forty-four students were able to participate in the posttest. However, only 41 of the 44 students had complete data which could be used to determine if there was any significant change in reading achievement as determined by the TAAS Reading scores from 1996 and 1997 and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading pre- and posttests. Of the 41 students, six were from one of the researcher's Honors Reading class, eight came from her Gifted and Talented class, and the remaining 27 were enrolled in her regular classes. Of the 41 students, 17 were males and 24 were females. Five of the 41 students had been retained at least one year. Ten of the 41 students were reading at least one grade level below 7th grade and 17 were reading two or more grade levels below 7th grade when the study began in October 1996. Of the 41 students, 27 had passed the TAAS test as 7th graders.

Instrumentation

To determine the students' reading abilities, the students were administered the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Form E in a pretest and a posttest format. The students also completed a survey to determine their attitude about the 30-minute required reading of self-selected books. The test is comprised of two parts - a vocabulary test and a comprehension test.

The Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test

The Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test measures important knowledge and skills that are common to most school reading curriculums. It includes both a vocabulary and a comprehension section. The vocabulary section includes words that are appropriate for the grades a particular level covers. The words are chosen for their usefulness and include a balance of nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs. The comprehension section covers a variety of topics. The selections are written in standard English and are at the appropriate levels of diffulty as determined by the different test forms. Both literal and inferential questions are used to test understanding of the passages. Only items of appropriate difficulty and usefulness as test items were chosen. The test requires approximately 65 minutes to administer. It can be administered as an individual test, a

small-group test, or as a class-size group test (Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests, Level E, Forms 1, 2, and 3 teacher's manual).

The Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 reliability coefficients were computed from the standardization sample for each level of the test. Alternate-forms and Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 reliability coefficients were computed for each test level. The K-R 20 coefficients ranged from .90 to .95 for Vocabulary and from .88 to .94 for Comprehension (Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests, Level E, Forms 1, 2, and 3 teacher's manual).

The Student Survey

The survey used in this study consisted of a modified version of the instrument used by Cope (1993) and Canady and Krantz (1996). As such, it required students to provide information on areas such as: types and frequencies of reading experiences encountered at home and at school, degree of enjoyment and personal satisfaction associated with reading experiences at school and outside of school, reasons individuals may have for reading, ownership of different types of reading materials, and reading interests. Several teachers from the middle school participating in the study, including teachers from the same academic team, and a University professor whose expertise is in the field of Reading reviewed the instrument. On the basis of their observations and after a careful review of related literature (Garcia, Pearson, & Jimenez, 1994; Silha, 1992; Kletzien & Hushion, 1992; Dobson, 1994), a 56-item instrument was constucted, which could be answered in approximately 30 minutes.

Data Collection Procedures

During the 1996-1997 school year, the 110 students who participated in this study were part of an academic team. One class consisted of 24 Gifted and Talented students, 29 Honors Reading students, and 57 regular students. In October 1996, these students were pretested with the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Form 1, Level E. However, due to conflicting school schedules, the posttest was administered until June 1997.

In order to secure a random selection of students for the posttest, the identification number assigned to the students by the school was used. Since the 110 students were divided among five classes, the decision was made to use every fifth student's name from the list until a sample size of 80 was obtained. Once identified, each of the 80 students was contacted and informed of the posttest procedure planned for June 1997. Sixty of the 80 students agreed to participate; however, only 44 actually came to take the posttest. Data collected from only 41 of the 44 students was analyzed, since complete data was not available for three of them.

On the dates of the posttest (i. e., June 20 and June 23, 1996) students were informed of the purpose of the study and given general instructions on completing the survey and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading test. Students began with the Vocabulary section of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test and took 20 minutes to complete it. They then completed the Comprehension section of test in 35 minutes. Lastly, they responded to the survey in approximately 30 minutes.

The results of the reading test were calculated using the answer key and tables provided in the Teacher's Manual of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Level E, Form 1. The students' pre- and posttest scores were used to determine pre- and post-Normal Curve Equivalents (NCE) scores.

Data Analysis Procedures

The results of the survey were calculated in two forms. First, all items that reflected attitudes were given a point value. Choices A, B, C, D, and E and choices SA, A, UD, D, SD were assigned 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 points, respectively. Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 19, 20, 34, 36, and 37 were not given a point value, as they did not reflect attitudes, but rather past and present reading habits. With the exception of questions 18, 39, 41, 43, 46, 50, 51, 54, and 55, the questions reflected strongly negative attitudes, if they received scores of 1 and 2; strongly positive attitudes were noted if these questions received responses of 4 or 5. Questions 18, 39, 41, 43, 46, 50, 51, 54, and 55 were given the reverse point values, i. e., 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1, because they were questions which reflected strongly positive to strongly negative attitudes. The lowest possible score was 0 and the highest possible score was 172 points. Scores which ranged between 0 - 66 indicated definitely poor attitudes towards reading. Scores which ranged from 149 - 172

indicated definitely positive attitudes towards reading. As with Cope's study, the lower the score, the poorer the attitude was towards reading and the higher the score, the more positive the attitude was towards reading.

The results of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, the student survey, and the students' 1995-1996 and 1996-1997 TAAS Reading scores were then entered into a table for data analysis. To analyze the data, the *t*-test for Nonindependent Samples was used to determine if there were significant differences between 1996 and 1997 TAAS Reading scores and the pre-and posttest NCE scores from the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test.

CHAPTER IV

Analysis of Data

This chapter includes the results of the study based on the research questions. Each research question is stated below and followed by statistical results.

Analysis of Research Questions

This study investigated the following research questions:

1. Does the reading of self-selected books for 30 minutes five times a week from October 1996 to May 1997 significantly improve eighth grade middle school students' reading achievement?
2. What are the attitudes towards reading of eighth grade middle school students who participated in the required 30-minute periods of reading self-selected books five times a week from October 1996 to May 1997?

Research Question One

1. Does the reading of self-selected books for 30 minutes five times a week from October 1996 to May 1997 significantly improve eighth grade middle school students' reading achievement?

The results of the 1996 and 1997 TAAS scores were compared using a t-test for Nonindependent samples to determine if there was any significant difference in the students' performance. The results indicated that there was no significant difference in TAAS scores with $t=1.04$, $df = 40$, $p > .10$. (See Table 4.1) However, there was a slight increase in the mean value from 73.29 to 74.66. The standard deviation decreased from 19.86 to 16.51, indicating that the range of scores had decreased.

Table 4.1

Pretest and Posttest Comparison of the 1996 and the 1997 TAAS Results Using a T-Test for Nonindependent Samples

Statistic	Value
Number of pairs of scores	41.00
Sum of "D"	56.00
Mean of D's	1.37
Sum of "D^2"	2880.00
t-value	1.04
Degrees of Freedom	40.00

The Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Level E, Form 1 was also used to determine if there was any significant improvement in reading achievement. The t-test for Nonindependent samples was used to calculate this index. The results indicated that there was no significant difference in the NCE scores taken from October, 1996 to June, 1997 with t=.32, df=40, p>.10. (See Table 4.2).

Table 4.2

Pretest and Posttest Comparison of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests Using a T-Test for Nonindependent Samples

Statisic	Value
Number of pairs of scores	41.00
Sum of "D"	15.00
Mean of D's	.37
Sum of "D^2"	2119.00
t-value	.32
Degrees of Freedom	40.00

To further analyze the data a pretest and posttest comparison of the TAAS and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test was made involving GT and nonGT students. While the GT students did participate in the required reading periods, they showed a decline in their achievement on the TAAS test, but exhibited a slight improvement on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading test. The nonGT students showed a slight improvement in the TAAS test, but not on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test. (See Tables 4.3 and 4.4).

Table 4.3

Pretest and Posttest Comparison of 1996 and 1997 TAAS Results Using a T-Test for Nonindependent Samples for Gifted and Talented (GT) Students and NonGT Students

Subjects	No. of Scores	df	t-value
GT	14	13	-1.40
NonGT	27	26	1.96 *

Note. * $p < .10$

Table 4.4

Pretest and Posttest Comparison of the Gates - MacGinitie Reading Test Using a T-Test for Nonindependent Samples for GT and NonGT Students

Subjects	No. of Scores	df	t-value
GT	14	13	.65
NonGT	27	26	.47

A pretest and posttest comparison of the TAAS and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test results was made involving the ESL (English as a Second Language) and NonESL students. The

ESL students showed a significant improvement in reading achievement on the TAAS test and only a slight improvement on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading test. (See Tables 4.5 and 4.6).

Table 4.5

Pretest and Posttest Comparison of 1996 and 1997 TAAS Results Using a T-Test for Nonindependent Samples for ESL and NonESL Students

Subjects	No. of Scores	df	t-value
ESL	8	7	4.54 *
NonESL	19	18	.68

Note. * $p < .01$

Table 4.6

Pretest and Posttest Comparison of the Gates - MacGinitie Reading Test Using a T-Test for Nonindependent Samples for ESL and NonESL Students

Subjects	No. of Scores	df	t-value
ESL	8	7	- .03
NonESL	19	18	.09

Research Question Two

2. What are the attitudes towards reading of eighth grade middle school students who participated in the required 30-minute periods of reading self-selected books five times a week from October 1996 to May 1997?

Of the 41 students studied, no student (0 %) fell into the clearly negative part of the student survey. With the exception of two students, 39 of the 41 students (95%) felt that the required reading was a good idea, that it had helped them improve their reading skills, their vocabulary, and their attitudes toward reading. The mean value for the student survey was 127.49 out of a possible 172. (See Appendix C).

Three (7 %) students stated that they did not enjoy reading. One of the three stated that the required reading had helped improve her reading abilities. (Her TAAS scores went from 43 to 60.) The same student stated that she had read more books than in the previous years (from 0 to 5). Another of the three was a GT student who did not like reading prior to doing the required reading this year. He stated that the required reading forced him into doing something which he disliked and attributed it to the decline in his reading ability. (His TAAS scores dropped from 92 to 89.) In a reflection letter, he commented that he had been reading fairly consistent up to January, 1997; however, since the required reading was not reinforced after this time, he read less. In January 1997, the department began preparing for the upcoming TAAS Reading test.

All students surveyed stated that they had read more books in the eighth grade than they had read in their previous two years in middle school. The students were required to read at least one book per six-weeks. Of the 41 students studied, 31 (75.61 %) read more than the required books.

The results of the survey are found in Appendix B. The following information reflects the students' responses to some of the key issues discussed in the review of the literature. These results are essential to help understand the students' attitudes towards reading.

Questions 2, 3, and 4 deal with parental involvement during the preschool years. The review of the literature indicates that parental involvement plays a major role in the development of reading. Table 4.7 indicates that of the 41 students, only 30% remember seeing their parents read often. Only 21% remember having their parents read often to them, and only 30% remember their parents often encouraging them to read.

Questions 5 and 6 provided an interesting view of how middle school students begin to shift away from parental influence to other influences. (See Table 4.8). What was surprising, was the big jump in teacher influence from elementary to middle school.

Table 4.7

Parental Involvement with Students' Reading Development

	Degree of Occurrence					
Behavior Observed	Very Seldom	Seldom	Occasionally	Very Often	Often	Total
Parents read at home	16	20	34	30	00	100
Parents read to them	28	25	26	19	02	100
Parents encouraged them to read	19	21	30	21	09	100

Note. Numbers in chart reflect the percentage of the 41 students who responded as indicated.

Table 4.8

Influences on Students' Reading Development

	Reading Influences					
	Parents	Friends	Librarians	Teachers	Others	Total
In elementary school	21	07	16	48	08	100
In middle school	02	21	00	71	06	100

Note. Numbers in chart reflect the percentage of the 41 students who responded as indicated.

The students who participated in this study stated that they primarily read for pleasure (59%). Only 27% claimed to read to fulfill class assignments. They stated that their favorite reading materials include books (61%) and magazines (32%). They prefer fiction (57%) over nonfiction (41%). Of the 41 students who participated, 93% percent stated that they own books at home. (See Appendix B)

When asked how they thought they read, 80% stated that they read from okay to really well. Yet, when asked how difficult reading was for them, 41% stated that reading was somewhat to very difficult. When asked how much of what they read they understood, 97% stated that they understood some to most of what they read. Additionally, when asked how much they enjoyed reading, 87% percent stated that they enjoyed reading from somewhat to very much. (See Appendix B).

Although some students indicated that they did not like to read, a substantial number was believe reading for fun is important. More than 90% percent stated that it is somewhat to very important for both kids and adults to read for fun. (See Table 4.9)

Table 4.9

The Importance of Reading for Fun

	Not Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	No Opinion	Total
By Kids	05	41	52	02	100
By adults	07	45	45	03	100

* Note. Numbers in chart reflect the percentage of the 41 students who responded as indicated.

The majority of the students stated that they read for more than 15 minutes a day. Forty-three percent stated that they read for more than 30 minutes. Students selected from mystery, suspense, tragedy, drama, and horror writers. No author was claimed as the overwhelming favorite, although R. L.. Stine did lead with 18% of the students choosing him as their favorite. Stephen King came in second with 13% of the students choosing him as their favorite author. Overall, the majority of the students were able to enjoy the required reading periods. They especially enjoyed being able to self-select the books which they could read. (See Appendix B). As Table 4.10 shows, the majority of the students experienced very positive attitudes towards reading as a result of participating in the required reading.

The students' enthusiasm is evident not only in their responses to the survey questions, but also in the number of books they read during their eighth grade year at this middle school. They read an average of 3.12 books in 6th grade, 4.66 books in 7th grade, and 12.4 books in 8th grade. It is clearly evident that many students went above and beyond the 30-minute required reading. The number of books read were checked and tallied by the English teacher on the team. She would put a star next to the student's name for each book read. At the beginning of the school year, the students were told that they had to read at least one book per six weeks for a total of six for the school year. Of the 41 students who participated in this study, 10 students did not readmore than the 6 books required by the researcher. Three students from the whole academic team read more than 40 books this school year. An analysis of variance (Gay, 1996) was used to compare the number of books readby students during the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. These data indicate a significant difference ($p < .001$) in the number of books read by students during the time of this study when compared to the two previous academic years. (See Table 4.11)

Table 4.10

Students' Attitudes Towards Reading *

Attitudes	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total
38. Reading is for learning but not for enjoyment.	02	10	07	42	39	100
39. Money spent on books is well spent.	22	46	22	07	02	099 *
40. Books are a bore.	05	07	15	29	44	100
41. Reading is a good way to spend spare time.	34	39	15	05	07	100
42. Sharing books in class is a waste.	02	05	17	44	32	100
43. Reading turns me on.	07	27	44	12	09	099 *
44. Reading is only for grade grubbers.	07	02	15	27	49	100
45. Books aren't usually good enough to finish.	02	15	09	29	44	099 *
46. Reading is rewarding to me.	27	37	17	12	07	100
47. Reading becomes boring after about an hour.	20	22	09	34	15	100
48. Most books are too long and dull.	09	24	17	34	15	099 *
49. Free reading doesn't teach anything.	00	05	12	49	34	100
50. There should be more free time for free reading during the school day.	30	28	30	05	08	101 *
51. There are many books which I hope to read.	34	42	15	00	09	100
52. Books should not be read, except for class requirements.	02	02	15	34	46	099 *
53. Reading is something I can do without.	05	09	37	22	27	100
54. A certain amount of summer vacation should be set aside for reading.	12	37	27	10	15	101 *
55. Books make good presents.	15	46	24	12	02	099 *
56. Reading is dull.	02	09	17	42	29	099 *

Note. Response Codes: SA: Strongly Agree; A: Agree; UD: Undecided; D: Disagree; SD: Strongly Disagree. Numbers in chart reflect the percentage of the 41 students who responded as indicated.

* Slight deviation from 100 percent resulted from rounding off students' responses to nearest whole percent.

Table 4.11

A Comparison of the Number of Books Read by Middle Students in the Sixth, Seventh, and Eight Grades

Statistic	Value		
	Sixth Grade	Seventh Grade	Eighth Grade
N	41.00	41.00	41.00
ΣX	128.00	191.00	508.00
$\overline{X}$	3.12	4.66	12.39
ΣX^2	722.00	1469.00	7998.00

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df		Mean Square	F-Ratio
Between	2023.24	(K-1)	2	1011.62	46.59 *
Within	2605.37	(N-K)	120	21.71	
Total	4628.60	(N-1)	122		

Scheffe' Tests	
Sixth Grade vs Seventh Grade	1.11
Sixth Grade vs Eighth Grade	40.55 *
Seventh Grade vs Eighth Grade	28.22 *

Note. * $p < .001$

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study purported to study the effects of self-selected reading on the reading achievement and reading attitudes of 41 eighth grade students who participated in the required reading initiative. The students were required to read one-half hour each day, Monday through Friday and keep a Reading Log from October 1996 to May 1997 academic year. In addition, the students were pre- and posttested using the TAAS test and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, Level E, Form 1. The results indicated that there were no significant gains in reading achievement as determined by an analysis of the pre- and posttest of the TAAS and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading tests. When the sample was further analyzed, students in the regular reading classrooms, specifically the ESL students, did show significant improvements on their performance on the TAAS test. However, they did not show significant improvement on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test. The results did indicate that the majority of the students did enjoy the required reading and felt that it had improved their reading skills, specifically their vocabulary and fluency. In addition, the opportunity provided by the required reading time positively impacted the students' overall attitude toward reading and the amount of reading for pleasure they did. Support for this was provided by the significant difference found in the number of books students read between sixth and eighth grade and between seventh and eighth grade.

Conclusions

While the study did not reflect significant gains in reading achievement for the 41 students as a whole, students with low to average reading abilities did show greater gains in reading achievement than did the students with better reading abilities. All of the classes received basically the same instruction; however, the GT and Honors Reading students were expected to perform at a

higher standard than the average students. ESL students received the same instruction, although, it often required further clarification.

One factor which may have helped the ESL group was that it had the smallest class size, which did allow for more one-to-one instruction. Another factor which may have influenced their performance on the TAAS test is that one of the researchers worked very closely with this group. Of the 17 students who belonged to this class, only about four were not involved in gangs. During the second semester, there were serious problems with gangs at the middle school. The researcher and the principal worked with the girls involved in the gangs. They asked the girls to become a part of the Reading Club during their lunch periods, which was when they had most of their problems. The girls did come in to the Reading Club until they were able to work their problems out. In addition, the researcher did provide further support to this class when they had conflicts or misunderstandings with other teachers. She occasionally was asked by other teachers to walk into their classrooms and speak to the class about their behavior or to clarify a lesson. Thus, the class was generally very receptive to the researcher and always tried to perform well in her class.

This ESL students performance may have been influenced by their selecting books close to their instructional level. Carver and Leibert (1995) found that similar groups of students tended to select books at their instructional levels and consequently experienced a greater degree of growth than more able readers, who selected books close to their independent levels. Langer (1997) suggests that when ESL students are provided the opportunity to get involved with real books and rich literature, they learn new things about literature and themselves, and they tend to develop good reading, metalinguistic, and metacognitive strategies. Yet, most ESL students are often treated as if they are unable to engage in extended literacy activities because teachers perceive that they lack adequate knowledge and language skills in English. They are more likely to be given short passages to read in simplified English. When they are respected, allowed to participate in real literature activities, and provided with an environment free of risks and ridicule, these students can and do perform just as well as nonESL students (Treu, 1995; Dupuy, Tse, & Cook, 1996; Gee, 1997; Langer, 1997).

Treu (1995) also found that she initially had lower-ability readers show higher gains in her reading programs than did her high-ability readers. She states that it was not that the high ability

readers were not able to do the tasks; rather, it was that they were used to completing worksheets quickly and corretly before the bell rang. In her class, she asked them to explain things in their own words and to think things out. She found that the higher-ability readers found it frustrating that they could not coast their way through her class.

A similar experience was found in the present study. When the present study began in October 1996, several GT and Honors students were found to provide very simple summaries of books they read, which resulted in their earning grades of 70's and 80's. When they complained about their grades, they were informed that they were expected to prepare more detailed and insightful reports with greater insights. When they complained about the grades, they were informed that they were expected to prepare more detailed and insightful reports about the books they were reading. Many of these students claimed it was difficult, since this was the first time they were asked to read, internalize, and then interpret what they had read. As the year progressed, these students became more proficient at preparing their Reading Logs and most of them stopped complaining.

The study also indicated that most students experienced positive attitudes towards reading as a result of the required 30-minute reading periods of self-selected books. Attitude, as reflected in the review of the literature, is the factor many educators feel is essential in the reading classroom (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996). While the study did not show significant overall gains in reading achievement, the self-selection of books did apparently get more students interested in reading. This is supported by the significantly greater number of books read in eighth grade than in either sixth or seventh grade by these students. This is perhaps the most significant outcome - getting middle school students to read.

In addition, most students read more than the assigned number of books, thereby indicating that they continued their reading beyond the requirements. These findings are consistent with those of Podl (1995), who states that because of her Guided Independent Reading, most of her students read more than they would have otherwise. Her students, as those who participated in this study, had very positive comments regarding their reading programs. Some of the comments made by the students who participated in this study include:

I thought this was a good idea because it helped me understand the importance of reading. It kept me off the streets and it helped me to learn new information. It also encouraged me to read more often. It gave me a [sic] determination.

It was a good idea, though I wish they had allotted more time for reading- maybe 45 minutes.

Most of the students who participated in the present study felt positive. However, some did the reading for the grades and did not show much change in attitudes as illustrated by the following comments:

I feel that half an hour was a reasonable reading time. It was not too much and at the same time it was sufficient time to fulfill the assignments.

It was okay, because even though you [sic] don't like to read you have to read for 30 minutes for a grade.

There were also two students who maintained their dislike for reading from before the required reading until the end of the school year. Their comments were:

I felt boring [sic] because sometimes I didn't understand it.

I disliked it very much because since I being [sic] forced to read I didn't really understand anything and because of me hating to read [sic] my ability to read went down bad.[sic]

The review of the literature provides evidence which indicates that the more students read for pleasure, the better their performance on reading achievement tests is likely to be (Ley, Schaer, & Dismukes, 1994). This indicates that if students continue this activity for a prolonged period of time, their performance on the TAAS test and other reading assessments should improve. However, as Carver and Leibert (1995) point out, students need to read at their instructional level,

if they are to show significant improvement in their reading achievement.

Limitations

This study was limited to students from only one academic team in a middle school. Thus, the generalizability of the results needs to be tempered with that consideration. Furthermore, the students' reading achievement scores may have been affected by the shift in emphasis which occurred in January 1997. At this time, a school-wide decision was made to focus a concerted effort on preparing students for the upcoming TAAS Reading test; thus, the importance given to students' reading self-selected books for 30 minutes each day may have been diminished somewhat due to concerns focused around students' performance on this test. Finally, due to scheduling conflicts, the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test had to be administered in June 1997, rather than in May 1997, as had been previously planned. As a result, only 41 (or 37%) of the 110 students who participated in the study were able to complete this instrument as a posttest measure and have the results analyzed as part of this study. A larger sample size may have yielded different results.

Recommendations

While the results did not indicate a significant overall change in students' reading achievement, the study does provide a framework for follow-up research. For instance, pre- and posttests should be administered during the school year to assess reading achievement. A reading workshop should also be instituted as part of the reading curriculum to ensure that adequate reading instruction complements the process of self-selecting books. The workshop should focus on instruction specifically geared to introduce skills and strategies designed to help poor and reluctant readers improve their reading abilities. For instance, lessons on vocabulary development can be introduced so that students can learn new vocabulary in context. Reading instructional strategies such as the Directed-Reading-Thinking-Activity (DRTA) and the Direct-Inquiry-Activity (DIA) can also be used to facilitate learning for all students, but in particular the ESL students. Echo or choral reading can help develop the oral language and fluency of ESL students. Students can also listen to popular books on cassette recordings as they follow along in the corresponding

text at listening stations. (Arthur, 1991; Thames & Reeves, 1994). Other strategies which can be used include visualization, rereading, predicting, personal identification, using background knowledge, inferencing, and noticing story structure. Visualization helps students to make a mental picture of what they are reading and thereby get a better idea of the story line. Rereading is helpful not only for facilitating comprehension, but also for improving word recognition and fluency (Kletzien & Hushion, 1992).

Consideration should also be given to identifying the students' instructional levels and ensuring that they read at their respective instructional level in order to help them make significant improvement in their reading achievement. When students encounter success and see improvement, their self-esteem and attitudes towards reading will also likely improve. If they are not being challenged to read, then they may become discouraged with themselves, with school, and with reading (Kletzien & Hushion, 1992).

Should the required reading be continued, despite the overall results which showed no significant improvement? The review of literature presented in this study indicates that one of the most pressing problems is the poor attitudes students seem to have towards reading (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996). If this is the case, the researchers believe that the required reading for 30 minutes five times a week should continue and possibly be expanded to all of the students in the middle school. Self reporting data from students and reading achievement data from ESL students, in particular, suggests that this is worth considering very carefully. Furthermore, the emphasis given to the initiative should be sustained throughout the year, even when students begin preparing for the TAAS test. Research clearly indicates that successful readers are those who read extensively from a variety of texts, including those considered to be at the individual's instructional level (Guszak, 1992; Carver & Liebert, 1995), to construct new and / or modified schemata, or simply to confirm something that they already know.

At the end of the 1996 - 1997 school year, the students who participated in this study were asked to write a reflection paper about the required reading and how they felt it had impacted their reading abilities. Although a few did indicate some negative attitudes towards the required reading, the vast majority provided very positive comments. Some of these comments are included below:

My reading abilities have changed a lot since I read the book called The Relic. This book got me interested in other books simply because it was thrilling. This book alone took me two weeks to finish, so I had to be doing a lot of reading at my house. Sometimes I would read up to four hours straight just because I found it very interesting and I wanted to know the ending too. Since I finished reading this book, I had already gotten used to reading a lot so I read more books. In these ways is how my reading abilities have changed.

In seventh grade I would read by force because we were assigned books. I have always hated to read because I thought it was a waste of time and boring. When you first told us that we had to read every single day for half-hour, I was amazed. I said to myself, 'I haven't even finished reading one book because I hate it, and she expects us to read everyday!' As you can see reading wasn't for me, but it was for a grade. As I continued doing it I was also enjoying it. I couldn't believe it, and I have read twenty books in the whole year. I love reading and have improved my skills. I hope I can continue reading books with more than 400 pages.

Comments like these indicate that students do and can learn to enjoy reading. We just have to: 1) remind them of the joys of reading; and 2), let them find out that they really do like it by providing them with the opportunity and material with which to rediscover the pleasure of reading.

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APPENDIX A

STUDENT SURVEY

Read the following questions carefully. Mark on your answer sheet the answer that is the closest to your answer. If the answer you mark is "other," write your answer in the space provided on the answer sheet.

1. When I was a small child (1-5 years old), I remember seeing my mother and/or father reading:
   a) Books, magazines, and newspaper
   b) Magazines and newspaper
   c) magazines
   d) newspapers
   e) Other_____

2. When I was a small child (1-5 years old), I remember seeing my mother and/or father reading:
   a) Very seldom (less than once per month)
   b) Seldom (1-3 days per month)
   c) Occasionally
   d) Often (3-5 days per week)

3. When I was a small child (1-5 years old), my mother and/or father read to me:
   a) Very seldom (less than once per month)
   b) Seldom (1-3 times per month)
   c) Occasionally (1 time per week)
   d) Often (3-5 times per week)
   e) Very Often (5-7 times per week)

4. When I was a small child (1-5 years old), my mother and/or father encouraged me to read:
   a) Very seldom b) Seldom c) Occasionally d) Often e) Very often

5. In elementary school, the biggest influence on my reading was:
   a) My mother and/or father b) Friends c) Librarians d) Teachers e)Others _____

6. In middle school, the biggest influence on my reading was:
   a) My mother and/or father b) Friends c) Librarians d) Teachers e)Others _____

7. In middle school, being made to read aloud in class:

a) Turned me off to reading b) Had no effect on my reading c) Motivated me to read more

8. In elementary school, I enjoyed my reading group.

a) I wasn't in a reading group b) No c) Had no effect on my enjoyment of reading d) Yes

9. In middle school, I enjoyed my reading group.

a) I wasn't in a reading group b) No c) No effect on my enjoyment of reading d) Yes

10. In elementary school, I was a member of a book club. a) No b) Yes

11. In middle school, I was a member of a book club. a) No b) Yes Which grades? _____

12. In elementary school, reading contests:

a) Turned me off to reading b) Had no effect on my reading c) Motivated me to read more

13. In middle school, reading contests:

a) Turned me off to reading b) Had no effect on my reading c) Motivated me to read more

14. In elementary school, I read certain favorite reading material over and over. a) No b) Yes

15. In middle school, I read certain favorite reading material over and over. a) No b) Yes

16. In elementary school, I read on my own:

a) Very seldom b) Seldom c) Occasionally d) Often e) Very often

17. In middle school, I read on my own:

a) Very seldom b) Seldom c) Occasionally d)Often e)Very often

18. Now, I read primarily for:

a) Pleasure b) To fulfill class assignments c) To obtain information

19. My favorite reading material has been: a) Books b) Newspapers c) magazines d) Other _____

20. I prefer: a) Fiction b) Nonfiction

21. Do you own any books? a) No b) Yes. How many? _____

22. Do you subscribe to any magazines for yourself? a) No b) Yes

23. Listening to your teacher read literature aloud is:

a) A negative reading experience b) A neutral reading experience c)A positive reading experience

24. How well do you think you read? a.) not very well b.) okay c.) really well

25. How difficult is reading for you? a.) very difficult b.) somewhat difficult c.) easy

26. How much do you enjoy reading? a.) not very much b.) somewhat c.) very much

27. How much of what you read in school do you understand?

a) not very much b) some of it c) most of it

28. How much of what you read is good information?

a.) not much b) some of it c) most of it

29. How important is it for kids to read for fun?

a) not very important b) somewhat important c) very important

30. How important is it for adults to read for fun?

a) not very important b) somewhat important c) very important

31. In your home, how many people spend time reading?

a) no one b) some of them c) everyone

32. How often do you read at home by yourself?

a.) never b.) 1-3 times per week c.) more than 3 times per week

33. How often do you read for fun?

a.) never b.) 1-3 times per week c.) more than 3 times per week

34. When you read, how long do you read? How many minutes? Hours?

35. Who is your favorite author?

36. How many books did you read in 6th grade? _____ 7th grade? _____ 8th grade? _____

(Include the titles of the books you read each year, if you can remember.)

37. How did you feel about the one-half hour reading required this past year?

Using one of the following statements, respond to items 38- 56 as honestly as possible.

SA) I strongly agree A) I agree UD) I am undecided D) I disagree SD) I strongly disagree

38. Reading is for learning but not enjoyment.	SA	A	UD	D	SD
39. Money spent on books is well spent.	SA	A	UD	D	SD
40. Books are a bore.	SA	A	UD	D	SD
41. Reading is a good way to spend spare time.	SA	A	UD	D	SD
42. Sharing books in class is a waste of time.	SA	A	UD	D	SD
43. Reading turns me on.	SA	A	UD	D	SD
44. Reading is only for grade grabbers.	SA	A	UD	D	SD
45. Books aren't usually good enough to finish.	SA	A	UD	D	SD
46. Reading is rewarding to me.	SA	A	UD	D	SD
47. Reading becomes boring after about an hour.	SA	A	UD	D	SD
48. Most books are too long and dull.	SA	A	UD	D	SD
49. Free reading doesn't teach anything.	SA	A	UD	D	SD
50. There should be more time for free reading during the school day.	SA	A	UD	D	SD
51. There are many books which I hope to read.	SA	A	UD	D	SD
52. Books should not be read except for class requirements.	SA	A	UD	D	SD
53. Reading is something I can do without.	SA	A	UD	D	SD
54. A certain amount of summer vacation should be set aside for reading.	SA	A	UD	D	SD
55. Books make good presents.	SA	A	UD	D	SD
56. Reading is dull.	SA	A	UD	D	SD

APPENDIX B

STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

1. When I was a small child (1-5 years old), I remember seeing my mother and/or father reading:

   26% a) Books, magazines, and newspaper
   35% b) Magazines and newspaper
   7% c) magazines
   30% d) newspapers
   2% e) others

2. When I was a small child (1-5 years old), I remember seeing my mother and/or father reading:

   16% a) Very seldom (less than once per month
   20% b) Seldom (1-3 days per month)
   34% c) Occasionally
   30% d) Often (3-5 days per week)

3. When I was a small child (1-5 years old), my mother and/or father read to me:

   28.0% a) Very seldom (less than once per month)
   25.5% b) Seldom (1-3 times per month)
   25.5% c) Occasionally (1 time per week)
   19.0% d) Often (3-5 times per week)
   2.0% e) Very Often (5-7 times per week)

4. When I was a small child (1-5 years old), my mother and/or father encouraged me to read:

   19% a) Very seldom
   21% b) Seldom
   30% c) Occasionally
   21% d) Often
   8% e) Very often

5. In elementary school, the biggest influence on my reading was:

   21% a) My mother and/or father
   7% b) Friends
   16% c) Librarians
   48% d) Teachers
   9% e)Others _____

6. In middle school, the biggest influence on my reading was:

2% a) My mother and/or father
21% b) Friends
0% c) Librarians
71% d) Teachers
6% e)Others _____

7. In middle school, being made to read aloud in class:

18% a) Turned me off to reading
23% b) Had no effect on my reading
59% c) Motivated me to read more

8. In elementary school, I enjoyed my reading group.

34% a) I wasn't in a reading group
11% b) No
14% c) Had no effect on my enjoyment of reading
39% d) Yes

9. In middle school, I enjoyed my reading group.

34% a) I wasn't in a reading group
16% b) No
7% c) No effect on my enjoyment of reading
41% d) Yes

10. In elementary school, I was a member of a book club. 80% a) No 16% b) Yes

11. In middle school, I was a member of a book club. 55% a) No 45% b) Yes

Which grades? 6th_____ 7th _____ 8th _____

12. In elementary school, reading contests:

23% a) Turned me off to reading
34% b) Had no effect on my reading
43% c) Motivated me to read more

13. In middle school, reading contests:

18% a) Turned me off to reading
45% b) Had no effect on my reading
36% c) Motivated me to read more

14. In elementary school, I read certain favorite reading material over and over.

34% a) No 64% b) Yes

15. In middle school, I read certain favorite reading material over and over.

50% a) No 48% b) Yes

16. In elementary school, I read on my own:

11% a) Very seldom
27% b) Seldom
27% c) Occasionally
27% d) Often
7% e) Very often

17. In middle school, I read on my own:

7% a) Very seldom
7% b) Seldom
25% c) Occasionally
23% d)Often
36% e)Very often

18. Now, I read primarily for:

59% a) Pleasure
27% b) To fulfill class assignments
7% c) To obtain information

19. My favorite reading material has been:

61% a) Books
0% b) Newspapers
32% c) magazines
7% d) Other _____

20. I prefer: 57% a) Fiction 41% b) Nonfiction

21. Do you own any books? 7% a) No 93% b) Yes How many? _____

22. Do you subscribe to any magazines for yourself? 48% a) No 52% b) Yes

23. Listening to your teacher read literature aloud is:

9% a) A negative reading experience
36% b) A neutral reading experience
55% c) A positive reading experience

24. How well do you think you read?

20% a.) not very well
66% b.) okay
14% c.) really well

25. How difficult is reading for you?

9% a) very difficult
32% b) somewhat difficult
59% c) easy

26. How much do you enjoy reading?

11% a)not very much
48% b) somewhat
39% c) very much

27. How much of what you read in school do you understand?

2% a) not very much
36% b) some of it
61% c) most of it

28. How much of what you read is good information?

5% a.) not much
64% b) some of it
32% c) most of it

29. How important is it for kids to read for fun?

5% a) not very important
41% b) somewhat important
52% c) very important

30. How important is it for adults to read for fun?

7% a) not very important
45% b) somewhat important
45% c) very important

31. In your home, how many people spend time reading?
14% a) no one
75% b) some of them
11% c) everyone

32. How often do you read at home by yourself?

21% a.) never
52% b.) 1-3 times per week
27% c.) more than 3 times per week

33. How often do you read for fun?

21% a.) never
59% b.) 1-3 times per week
20% c.) more than 3 times per week

34. When you read, how long do you read? How many minutes? Hours?

9% stated they read less than 15 minutes
48 % stated they read between 15 minutes and 30 minutes
20 % stated they read between 30 minutes and 60 minutes
23 % stated they read more than one hour

35. Who is your favorite author?

10 of the 41 (24 %) stated that they had no favorite author
8 of the 41 (20 %) selected R. L.. Stine as their favorite author
6 of the 41 (15 %) selected Stephen King as their favorite author
3 of the 41 (7 %) stated that they liked all authors
2 of the 41 (5 %) selected Cynthia Voight as their favorite author
2 of the 41 (5 %) selected Douglas Preston as their favorite author
1 of the 41 (2 %) selected Lurlene McDaniel as their favorite author
1 of the 41 (2 %) selected Dean Koontz as their favorite author
1 of the 41 (2 %) selected Anne McCarthy as their favorite author
1 of the 41 (2 %) selected H. G.. Wells as their favorite author
1 of the 41 (2 %) selected Nancy Collins as their favorite author
1 of the 41 (2 %) selected Judy Blume as their favorite author
1 of the 41 (2 %) selected Richard Peck as their favorite author
1 of the 41 (2 %) selected Anne Rice as their favorite author
1 of the 41 (2 %) selected Mary Shelley as their favorite author
1 of the 41 (2 %) selected Lincoln Childs as their favorite author
1 of the 41 (2 %) selected William Shakespeare as their favorite author

(One student selected two authors as his favorite.)

36. How many books did you read in 6th grade? _____ 7th grade? _____ 8th grade? _____

(See Appendix C)

37. How did you feel about the one-half hour reading required this past year?

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Attitudes	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total
38. Reading is for learning but not for enjoyment.	02	10	07	42	39	100
39. Money spent on books is well spent.	22	46	22	07	02	099 *
40. Books are a bore.	05	07	15	29	44	100
41. Reading is a good way to spend spare time.	34	39	15	05	07	100
42. Sharing books in class is a waste.	02	05	17	44	32	100
43. Reading turns me on.	07	27	44	12	09	099 *
44. Reading is only for grade grubbers.	07	02	15	27	49	100
45. Books aren't usually good enough to finish.	02	15	09	29	44	099 *
46. Reading is rewarding to me.	27	37	17	12	07	100
47. Reading becomes boring after about an hour.	20	22	09	34	15	100
48. Most books are too long and dull.	09	24	17	34	15	099 *
49. Free reading doesn't teach anything.	00	05	12	49	34	100
50. There should be more free time for free reading during the school day.	30	28	30	05	08	101 *
51. There are many books which I hope to read.	34	42	15	00	09	100
52. Books should not be read, except for class requirements.	02	02	15	34	46	099 *
53. Reading is something I can do without.	05	09	37	22	27	100
54. A certain amount of summer vacation should be set aside for reading.	12	37	27	10	15	101 *
55. Books make good presents.	15	46	24	12	02	099 *
56. Reading is dull.	02	09	17	42	29	099 *

Note. Response Codes: SA: Strongly Agree; A: Agree; UD: Undecided; D: Disagree; SD: Strongly Disagree. Numbers in chart reflect the percentage of the 41 students who responded as indicated.

* Slight deviation from 100 percent resulted from rounding off students' responses to nearest whole percent.

APPENDIX C

1996-97 TAAS Results and Gates-MacGinitie Pretest and Posttest Results
and Student Survey Results on Number of Books Read and Attitudes Toward Reading

PD.	1996 TAAS	1997 TAAS	Oct. NCE	June NCE	BOOKS 6th	7th	8th	ATTD.
07	38	40	27	24	03	01	07	111
07	68	77	38	42	02	05	15	131
07	45	51	23	15	00	00	05	154
01	48	53	13	09	00	00	04	100
01	62	57	17	31	05	02	04	125
01	64	77	45	37	03	04	12	135
03	86	79	48	45	05	09	15	150
01	50	55	24	28	04	05	05	099
01	54	71	44	41	00	01	04	115
06	92	94	65	53	04	05	12	141
02	72	64	37	45	05	03	12	137
06	96	91	63	61	08	04	21	140
03	78	87	65	70	05	09	15	142
02	43	60	24	09	00	00	05	079
01	90	87	45	45	06	10	13	120
03	86	89	43	43	01	03	25	142
06	99	94	91	99	10	10	18	154
07	38	44	22	07	00	00	04	127
06	88	89	61	57	00	02	07	081
01	76	55	30	26	00	05	04	122
03	99	93	52	53	02	04	16	135
06	92	89	60	61	01	02	09	109
06	92	77	53	55	05	13	17	131
01	90	99	54	52	01	02	12	128
02	48	55	15	09	05	03	10	090
02	68	68	43	36	04	08	19	137
01	72	77	40	37	07	10	15	138
01	70	71	36	48	00	02	23	127
02	78	68	30	37	02	05	10	127
03	84	91	52	58	01	02	15	149
01	92	86	50	45	07	10	17	136
06	99	94	72	81	03	04	25	138
01	76	79	38	37	00	03	11	150
07	50	59	07	27	02	04	07	122
03	94	87	34	34	10	10	18	125
06	99	97	63	65	07	15	25	141
07	58	64	28	27	04	07	05	134
01	88	95	60	62	01	02	21	128
01	80	79	17	23	03	05	14	135
07	31	49	11	17	02	00	05	123
TOTALS	3005	3061	1681	1696	128	191	508	5227
AVERAGES	73.29	74.66	41	41.37	3.12	4.66	12.39	127.48

Note. PD: Refers to the class period in which students took Reading at the middle school. ATTD: Refers to the students' scores on the reading attitude survey.